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3.) Maritime Service Chiefs Vow To Grow Their Forces, Relearn Old Lessons / 23 FEB 17 [\[LINK\]](#)

SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE, Carl Prine

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4.) Nearly 250,000 DoD Employees Will See A New Personnel Appraisal System In April / 20 FEB 17 [\[LINK\]](#)

FEDERAL NEWS RADIO, Scott Maucione

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5.) 21st Century Sailor bi-weekly roll-up:

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- Physical Activity May Diminish Risk of Mood Disorders in Genetically Predisposed Individuals [\[LINK\]](#)
- America the Beautiful and Diverse - [\[LINK\]](#)
- Carderock Partners with Academic Communities to Cultivate Future Workforce - [\[LINK\]](#)

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1.) Get to the Fleet Faster - Big Changes Coming To A Schools / 19 FEB 17

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The Navy is pulling the trigger on radical changes to the way it trains the entire enlisted force.

Gone will be the days of long, upfront technical training known as Class A school: the one that can last up to two years and for many sailors is the only trade-school training they will get during a 20-year career in the Navy.

Instead, the new regimen will include a far-shorter stint following boot camp that will be whittled down to just what sailors need to succeed in their first tour. Sailors will get to the fleet far sooner — and with far less preparation — than with traditional A schools.

After that, additional training will be spread over a sailor's career, coming in blocks given each time a sailor returns to sea. The new model will make enlisted training more closely resemble that of officers, who receive professional military education and career-specific training at various points throughout their careers.

The Navy's new training system, which starts this year for several ratings, will involve less brick-and-mortar schooling and more distance learning. It will aim to keep sailors more abreast of the cutting-edge technology impacting their career field. And it will give the Navy more agility to revamp and modernize training for future missions.

"We are developing a career-long learning continuum where training is delivered by modern methods to enable faster learning and better knowledge retention at multiple points throughout a career, just as we do for officers," said Vice Adm. Robert Burke, the chief of naval personnel.

The end result, Burke said, will transform what he calls the current "industrial, conveyer-belt-training model" into career-long training where "content is refreshed for changing technologies so sailors are ready to perform on day one at their new units."

The new, truncated A schools will be on average about 30 percent as long as those that sailors attend today. Yet for many career sailors, the new regimen will actually increase the total amount of training and education they'll receive during a Navy career.

The Navy calls it Ready Relevant Learning, and considers it a critical piece of the ratings modernization effort announced last year. That effort included the Navy's controversial decision to eliminate sailors' ratings, a move that the top brass reversed in December after months of criticism.

Nevertheless, Burke and other top Navy leaders plan to push ahead with structural reforms aimed at a similar goal of making Navy career paths more flexible, which include breaking up traditional A school into a series of training blocks spread over many years.

Over time, the Navy hopes the training pipeline will provide customized training and development for individual sailors, allowing sailors to train and qualify in an array of skills outside their own rating's traditional career path. That, in turn, will open up new duty assignments, advancement opportunities and civilian certifications.

The biggest change of all may be the decision to transfer responsibility for most of the training to the fleet. Today training is mostly overseen by Naval Education and Training Command, but in the future, the NETC's oversight will end after a sailor completes their initial schools on the way to their first sea tour.

That's a big challenge — and potential pitfall — for the fleet, Navy officials say.

WHO GETS IT AND WHEN

The transformation of the training pipeline has been in the works for a few years, but it wasn't until the start of fiscal year 2017 in October that the Navy received the funding to set it in motion.

The implementation will start this year as sailors in four ratings begin to train in the new system, and 15 additional ratings could get the go-ahead later this year.

Another 34 ratings are in the early stages of development and will gradually come online over the next three years Navy officials say.

By 2020, a majority of Navy's 87 ratings will be training sailors under the new format.

The seed of the concept has been around for decades and stems from the model the Navy currently uses to train pilots throughout their careers.

When aviators and flight officers wrap up shore duty and get ready to head back to the fleet, they go back to flight school for a refresher course to get current not only in flying but in the latest technology as well.

Nothing like that happens for most sailors, who might spend three years pushing boots at Great Lakes or recruiting, and are then sent right back to sea with the expectation that they will pick up where they left off.

The time required for them to get back up to speed reduces readiness, top Navy officials say.

"The concept is called block learning," said Rear Adm. Mike White, who commands Naval Education and Training Command and has helped spearhead development of the new custom career paths. "We take today's curriculum [for each rating] and look at it from that lens of: When would it best be delivered across the first tour and across a career? We will then break it apart and deliver it at the appropriate time."

Sailors will get "block zero" during their initial pipeline training on their way to their first sea tour, White said. Block one would occur during the first sea tour, block two would be their second sea tour and so forth.

The individual training blocks completed by sailors will be tracked with a new Navy database that will allow the Navy to have full visibility on its human capital and help detailers to assign sailors in the most effective way.

"We will need to ... create a single, authoritative database that captures a sailor's combination of NECs, experience and proficiency — a snapshot of their DNA," CNP Burke said.

BLOCK CONSTRUCT

As Navy officials draw up new training plans for individual ratings, take a close look at not only what skills sailors will need in the fleet, but also when they will need those skills.

For example, one of the first ratings transitioning to the new model this year is logistics specialist. Those sailors are the Navy's supply clerks, but they're also responsible for the mail system — collecting, sending sorting and delivering the mail.

Currently in A school, all sailors training to be logistics specialists get postal clerk training before entering the fleet. But, "it turns out that most apprentice LS's will not be a postal clerk for at least a couple of years in the fleet," White said.

"They spend their first couple years mastering their other duties in the rating before they're assigned to this kind of work," White said.

That's why the postal clerk training has been pushed out into a block that sailors will receive after they've served in the fleet for a while. "We believe it is best if you defer that postal clerk training; and then deliver it after a couple years when they are ready to take on that responsibility," White said.

Deferring that block of training, which in this specific case lasts up to eight days, until later in a sailor's first sea tour saves time and also ensures that knowledge is fresh and up to date when the sailors take on that duty, White said.

Training for tasks that more senior sailors do will be put off to for future blocks of training as they return to sea for second and third sea tours with the same idea of ensuring the skills are fresh and they have been taught the most current information.

Right now, White said, about 53 of the Navy's 87 ratings will fit well into this block training construct. But that leaves 34 ratings to wrestle with how to put their skills into a career-long learning construct.

One such rating is air traffic controllers.

"They need to come out with essentially their FAA qualification so that they can go be part of an air traffic control team," White said. "That was not one we could give them half the training up front and half later because they had to leave the schoolhouse ready, so we did not see a way to block that curriculum."

Now, down the road, this effort may give us some tools to help improve the way they learn, but, it just did not fit the mold of the premise of Ready Relevant Learning."

What happens to these ratings, remains to be seen, but officials tell Navy Times the long-term goal is to provide all sailors with career-long training opportunities, though much may need to simply evolve over time.

HIGH-TECH TRAINING

Today's junior sailors are used to using technology in all aspects of their lives. That means that the Navy is looking at quite a wide range of possibilities when it comes to delivering training to sailors.

This doesn't mean that traditional brick and mortar schools are going away. Instead, it means that schools could be augmented with high-tech tools that help sailors learn by using gaming and virtual reality along with traditional book study.

These high-tech tools could be made mobile, making training available to sailors at the waterfront without having to send them miles away from their homes and commands.

To help the Navy develop new and more effective training, White said they've turned to the Naval Air Warfare Center Training Systems Division out of Orlando, Florida, where Navy officials are already at work developing the next generations of training technology.

“They are leading the effort to now visit the classrooms that we teach those ratings in today, and do a little bit of a knowledge capture and analysis of that training — should it continue to be instructor led? Do we have modernized delivery methods with computer simulation, or gamification, or other opportunities that would increase the retention of knowledge?”

One such technology is what he calls the Multi-Purpose Reconfigurable Training System, something that’s already in the fleet being used by the submarine community.

Simply put, this is a room of large, flat, touch-screen displays, White said. Those displays can simulate a torpedo room on a Virginia Class submarine in the morning and be re-booted in the afternoon to be a submarine radio room.

This system can be installed permanently in a schoolhouse or configured as mobile training platform, put into a trailer and drive down the pier to provide the training where the sailors are, he said.

In addition, he said, the service is also looking at other options for training, such as applications that can be accessed on personal smart phones and tablets.

Already the service has begun to offer such apps that teach some General Military Training topics. But this is expected to expand to other areas in the future, officials say.

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Sure, the Naval Education and Training Command, which has overseen enlisted training for generations, will still be part of the picture.

But as the transformation of the Navy’s training pipeline starts to take effect this year, it will be the fleet commanders — both Atlantic and Pacific — who will decide when the sailor gets their next level of training.

“For the ship CO, he gets to decide when that sailor is ready for that advanced training,” said Al Gonzalez, the top personnel and training official at Fleet Forces Command.

“It may happen at year one plus one day, or [the CO] may say you need a little more time.”

Starting this year, the Navy will be cutting up-front training in ‘A’ school by as much as 70 percent, and the oversight by NETC will end when sailors head to their first duty assignment.

Fleet commanders will oversee the bulk of a sailors’ advanced training, that will now be broken up into “blocks” of training and spread intermittently across a sailor’s career after spending time on the job in the fleet.

It’ll be up to the fleet commanders to decide exactly what sailors will learn and when.

“Once [sailors] have been on the ship for about a year and they have proven their ability to absorb more knowledge in their particular career field ... we will give the command an opportunity to get that sailor to block one, which is their next update on their career field.”

The changes signal a historic break from the Navy's long-standing tradition of giving sailors lengthy initial training and teaching skills that sailors might not use for years — if ever.

"If we train them on something that they will not use for the next three, four, five years, they lose their skill-set in those areas," Gonzalez said.

"What we are doing is we are looking at all that accession training and figuring out what they need in the first two years that they are going to be on the platform," he said.

In the past, efforts to cut training invariably led to grumbling from the fleet and specifically the deck plates that newly minted junior sailors were arriving at their first duty assignment without the skills to do their jobs.

There is some anxiety about how the new regimen will work in practice. Some people in the Navy are wondering whether the shortened A-Schools will provide junior sailors with the skills they'll need at their first job.

And there's also concern among some senior enlisted officials that commands won't get their sailors to follow on training — and here, there's some historical precedent.

Fleet commands have traditionally been stingy with sailor's time, given all the operational commitments, inspections and maintenance required in the fleet today. And the result is, sometimes, that sailors have suffered at the hands of their commands.

For example, the Navy has long required sailors to attend leadership training as they advance to the next paygrade. A decade ago, that training was a week-long and was given at training commands. But in some cases, commanders did not prioritize that training and at one point 28,000 sailors who did not have that training were at risk of not being eligible for promotion.

It took a year and a concentrated effort by personnel officials, including suspending the advancement requirement for the training for a year so the Navy could get more sailors into that training course and whittle down the number of impacted sailors to 10,000.

But the problem persisted and within months the training was reworked.

But Gonzalez says that this situation will be different from the get go.

"That was a very significant point when the fleet became the leader in this particular activity," Gonzalez. "As we looked at what we were doing to the operating forces, we did not want to put an undue burden on them, and that this effort provides tangible improvement for both the sailor and the ship."

With the fleet running the show, he said, it's easier for leadership to set the expectations for commanders — as well as setting the rules for ensuring sailors get their follow-on training within set limits.

This gives the command the chance to gauge the sailor's actual performance, Gonzalez says, and to work with him or her on where their skills are lacking — and they can find the right place in the ship's schedule.

"They can remediate a few of the things that they need to so that when he goes back to the training he is all up to speed and he is not going to be behind when he enters that course."

Gonzalez says the rules have been set to help the sailor as well as the command.

“What we have done for the ships is a number of things, First we have given them a wide area on which to get the sailor back to the training,” he said.

“Two, we give the CO of that ship a guarantee — and in fact it is not even a question — that sailor would be going back to the same unit that he came from when he gets done with the training.

And what the command gets is an improved sailor, ready to take the knowledge he gets from that course and apply it immediately to the ship that invested that time in sending him.

“So the ship has an investment and a reward coming out of getting that sailor ready for his next block — and then when he comes back they get the benefit of that sailor having a higher level of skillset to perform on the same ship that he left,” Gonzalez said.

“The sailor benefits because he does not have to re-qualify on watch stations or warfare qualifications, does not have to move and comes back to the ship knowing that he can do a better job.”

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SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE, Carl Prine

A rare assemblage of America’s maritime service chiefs on Thursday triggered vows to rebuild and modernize their forces to deter a host of potential foes, from crafty terrorists to rising state rivals.

Moderated by retired Navy Adm. James Stavridis, the town hall featured Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Paul Zukunft and Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller. The event capped West 2017, the annual gathering of many of the military’s top brass at San Diego’s downtown convention center.

During the Thursday panel, all three flag officers agreed that the United States has returned to an era of great power competition, something Richardson said had disappeared with the fall of the Soviet Union more than two decades ago.

“That’s a long off-season,” said the career submariner, who pledged to get the Navy “back fit to fight.”

Neller called the moment a “back to the future” event, similar to the Cold War rivalry with the Iron Curtain states but now involving weapons designed to be deployed in space and along cyber networks. While he predicted his Marines would “quickly adapt” to the new global challenges, Neller conceded that they “have some work to do.”

Zukunft’s Coast Guard, part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security since 2004, urged the audience to consider the far-flung mission of his agency and the challenges that it faces.

He pointed to refugees fleeing northward from Central American states because of destabilization and crime triggered by the United States’ demand for narcotics, which are smuggled through their homelands. He also talked about increasing commercial and military rivalries in the polar north, where melting ice is opening new pathways for ships.

Zukunft said a lack of icebreakers handicaps American security operations in the Arctic, rendering the United States mere “bystanders.”

“Russia has 40 icebreakers. I have two,” Zukunft said. “Our one heavy icebreaker (Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star, commissioned in 1976) is a real national asset. It’s now returning from breaking 65 miles of channel over 10 feet thick. And every evening, I’m getting an update on if she’s gonna break done. Is she going to get back.”

The Coast Guard intends start buying a new line of breakers in 2020, but Zukunft groused that it takes a dozen years to deliver a ship to the fleet because the procurement process is tangled in red tape.

With the new administration of President Donald Trump pledging to broker an end to the so-called “sequestration” budget deal of 2011 that slashed military spending, the maritime leaders have scribbled spending wishlists.

Finding a replacement for the Ohio-class submarine is important, Richardson said, but so is the urgent need to fix “readiness right now.” That means more money for fuel, spare parts and weapons so sailors can train more to deter future wars. Richardson compared the promised budget boon to giving a “first bottle of water to a dehydrated athlete.”

Zukunft said the Coast Guard is already cleared to buy the entire line of 58 Sentinel-class fast response cutters, but his Coasties crewing inland river patrol boats also need bigger and more modern vessels — with the replacements retailing for about \$25 million each.

Noting that Marines remain on the battlefield in Iraq and Afghanistan — a reality despite their official roles of handling the noncombat roles of training and advising Iraqi and Afghan security forces — Neller said the operational tempo during 16 years of war has worn down the career force along with the weapons systems they use. He promised to spend money to “get the bench deeper and stronger.”

Neller also staked out the Marines’ position on a free press.

In a pair of tweets sent last week — one that was later deleted — Trump called many of the leading American news outlets “fake” and claimed they were “sick” and the “enemy of the American people.”

On Wednesday at West 2017, retired Navy Adm. William McRaven, a career SEAL commando, urged everyone to challenge this sentiment because it was possibly the “greatest threat to democracy in my lifetime.”

Saying that he aligned with McRaven’s views, Neller told the audience Thursday that an “active, vibrant press that reports things” was vital to a democracy and that commanders had an obligation “as Americans” to be “open, transparent and straight up,” just as journalists share a similar burden to “report things accurately.”

“With 1 percent of the population serving in the military, why would we not want to let people know what we’re doing so that they understand that this is their military? It belongs to the American people,” said Neller, a combat veteran who served in Somalia, Panama and Iraq.

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FEDERAL NEWS RADIO, Scott Maucione

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This April DoD will fold multiple services and components into its New Beginnings initiative, which began last spring.

The initiative requires more frequent reviews between supervisors and employees and a linkage between performance and rewards such as bonuses and promotions. DoD hopes the new system will reward harder workers by giving them incentives.

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The next phase of New Beginnings will bring in multiple facets of the Army including U.S. Army Europe, Army Test and Evaluation Command, U.S. Army Network Enterprise Technology Command and Army Criminal Investigation Command.

Other institutions that will come into the fold include:

- U.S. European Command.
- National Guard Bureau.
- Air Force.
- Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Chief of Naval Operations, Command-Navy Installations Command, Department of the Navy Assistant for Administration, Manpower, Personnel, Training and Education.
- Defense Contract Audit Agency.
- Defense Human Resources Activity.
- Defense Logistics Agency.
- Defense Media Agency.
- Missile Defense Agency.
- DoD Office of the Inspector General.
- Joint Staff.
- Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

One of the most notable attributes of the New Beginning initiative is the three-tiered employee rating system to assess performance.

Certain elements of employees' work will be rated outstanding, fully successful or unacceptable. The criterion for outstanding work includes exceptional results, exceeding high metrics, acting as an expert and role model and handling roadblocks well. On the other hand, unacceptable work is defined as being unreliable, making poor decisions, failing to use skills required for the job and requiring more supervision than expected.

"One of the changes we are really trying to advocate through this system would be that we have communication throughout the ratings cycle and that the employees receive recognition and acknowledgement of their performance and their contribution to the nation throughout the ratings cycle and then there is nothing that comes as a surprise on the 365th day," Paige Hinkle-Bowles, former deputy assistant secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy told Federal News Radio last year.

The new system requires supervisors to hold a minimum of three formal documented performance discussions with an employee per year.

"It focuses on improving overall performance management through continuous engagement between supervisors and employees. It allows us to link organizational missions and goals to individual performance of the employees by providing regular feedback during the appraisal cycle," Hinkle-Bowles said.

DoD already transitioned about 14,000 employees to the new system and plans to finish moving all DoD civilian workers to the New Beginnings system by 2018.

The department will reissue its DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Awards Instruction to standardize employee rewards across DoD.

Along with that instruction the Pentagon will release a supplement instruction to inform supervisors, human resources personnel and employees about the award programs and process.

The New Beginnings overhaul stems from requirements in the 2010 and 2012 defense authorization acts. The laws asked for a system that redesigns “procedures for use within DoD to make appointments to positions within the competitive service in a way that supports the mission, managers and applicants.”

The law also allows the department to establish a DoD Civilian Workforce Incentive Fund to monetarily spur on employees based on team or individual performance and to attract and retain employees with certain qualifications or abilities. DoD later chose not to create the fund.

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